Like Stephen

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[0:00] So if you have your Bible, let's read Acts chapter 6 verses 8 through 15 together.

! And of those who belong to the synagogue of the freedmen, as it is called, and of the Cyrenians and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking. Then they secretly instigated men who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.
And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him, and they seized him, and they brought him before the council. And they set up false witnesses who said, This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.
And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel. So this passage of Scripture marks the transition in the book of Acts.
[1:30] The dominating figure to this point has been Peter. Paul will be introduced in chapter 7, and then after his conversion, which recorded in chapter 9, he then becomes the dominant figure in the book of Acts, and Peter begins to fade from the scene.

Bridging the gap between these two giants of the faith is Stephen. Peter's ministry was primarily to the Jews. Paul's was primarily to the Gentiles. And Stephen's brief ministry was mainly to Jews from Gentile lands.
So Peter was primarily to the Jews. Paul primarily to the Gentiles. And Stephen here is speaking to Jews from Gentile lands. Stephen's ministry would lead to martyrdom and subsequently the spread of the gospel through the persecution of the church in Jerusalem.
So we'll see that ultimately Stephen will give a speech that will convict the hearts of those who hear it, but not in the right way. Instead of repenting, they will kill him.
And Paul was there witnessing all this. He was, you know, holding on, watching everybody's coats as they stoned Stephen to death. And so after Stephen dies, there's a great persecution of the church in Jerusalem there.
[2:47] That's a terrible thing. But as a result of that, the church, they spread. And the church continues to grow outside of Jerusalem and more people hear the gospel. So we'll see when we get to chapter 7 and chapter 8 how God is able to, how God is sovereign, even over this situation where there's a lot of suffering.

There's death. There's pain. But God uses it in a way that is able to reach more people for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the church does not die.
In fact, it just continues to explode. And more people hear the gospel, more people believe as a result of that. Though Stephen's ministry was brief, he accomplished his mission.
He fulfilled his God-given purpose. Stephen did not reap the harvest from his bold and courageous testimony concerning the gospel, but many seeds were planted and a rich harvest followed from his bold and courageous testimony.
Stephen was one of the seven chosen out of the thousands of men. If you remember, we were there a few weeks ago talking about those first men who served the tables. Stephen was one of those men.
[3:56] Stephen, his name was actually the first that was mentioned, if you recall, which goes to show that as far as the church was concerned, this was a man that they loved. This was a man that they highly respected.

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When they were looking for seven volunteers, he was the first name that was mentioned. So Stephen was a major figure in the church, somebody that people knew, somebody that people loved, somebody that people, they cherished him in the church.
And what I want us to see today or tonight is that we need more believers like Stephen in our churches today. We need more believers who will act like him, who will be bold, believers who have the right attitude, believers who take bold and courageous action in their presenting and defending the gospel, and whose appearance reflects the glory of God.
So on the 31st, when we go out and engage, hopefully this is what people see. They see the way that we're interacting with each other, the way that we're interacting with them. They see the glory of God in this, and we're reflecting that glory to them.
So let's look at that first thing that believers need to be like. Like Stephen, believers need to have the right attitude. We need to have the right attitude. That comes from verse 8.
[5:10] And again, if you're looking at your Bible, verse 8 says, And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. Full there in the Greek comes from a word which means to be filled up.

And so this indicates that Stephen was filled up and totally controlled by his faith in Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit was working powerfully through him as a result of that.
He was a man whose attitude was marked as being full of grace, and that meant that the Holy Spirit was able to use him to minister to others in a very powerful way. As we will see in a few weeks when we get into chapter 7, Stephen's faith was based upon the fact that he believed that God was the sovereign ruler over all of history.
Stephen saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy, and believed that he had risen and that he had been exalted to the right hand of God the Father. That's what all he will preach and testify to.
His confidence in these truths produce an attitude of calmness within himself, even when he was facing his enemies who wanted to kill him. He still was calm.
[6:19] He was bold. He was courageous. He had the right attitude. Sadly, many Christians today don't possess that same kind of attitude. They lack this kind of faith. We are less like Stephen and more like the father of the demon-possessed man, or the demon-possessed boy whom Jesus healed.

Remember the man who said to Jesus, I believe, but help me with my unbelief. I think more often that characterizes people in the church today. We believe, but we need help with that unbelief.
It's not that we don't have faith. It's that our faith is often found lacking. It should be stronger. We struggle with trusting God in the everyday concerns of our everyday lives, and that shouldn't be the case because we see that God is faithful always.
Always faithful. Stephen's attitude revealed that he was full of faith, that he was also full of the Holy Spirit. So the question I want to ask you is, can we experience that same kind of fullness today?
And the answer is yes. Yes, we can. We can experience that same kind of fullness today. And here I have a quote from John MacArthur, and that's on your sheet there.
[7:29] He says, To be full of faith is to trust God. To be filled with the Spirit is to obey fully His will. Stephen believed God and submitted to the leading of the empowering, purifying Holy Spirit.

Those two realities epitomize the strength of the Christian life. A couple of weeks ago, I was at a conference at Midwestern where I went to seminary Mark Dever and the Nine Marks conference on expository preaching.
And he shared a quote with us from a man named Hughes Old. I don't know if any of you have heard of Hughes Old. He's not with us anymore. He is an old theologian.
And he didn't necessarily agree with John MacArthur and all of his theology, but he made this quote about him. And so Mark Dever was saying, All of us as pastors, as ministers, should aspire to be spoken of in this way.
So I want to share with you Hughes Old's comment, description of John MacArthur. This is what he says. What is more than clear to me after listening to these sermons, and he's talking about John MacArthur, is that those who can take the text the way it is seem to make a lot more sense of it than those who are always trying to second guess it.
[8:51] Surely one of the greatest strengths of MacArthur's preaching is his complete confidence in the text. And then he continues, Why do so many people listen to MacArthur?

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This product of all the wrong schools, he questions, right? Because they don't have the same theology. How can he pack out a church on Sunday morning in an age in which church attendance has seriously lagged?
Here is a preacher who has nothing in the way of a winning personality, good looks, or charm. Here is a preacher who offers us nothing in the way of sophisticated homiletical packaging.
No one would suggest that he is a master of the art of oratory. What he seems to have is a witness to true authority. He recognizes in Scripture the Word of God, and when he preaches it, it is the Scripture that one hears.
It is not that the words of John MacArthur are so interesting as it is that the Word of God is of surpassing interest. That is why one listens. So, in a way, it sounds like he's putting down John MacArthur, right?
[9:53] But, and I think I've even heard somebody share this quote, and John MacArthur was out in the audience listening to it, and he was probably chuckling. He probably agreed with it. But, you know, it sounds like he put down, but really what he's saying is, here's a guy who doesn't care about what he looks like, what he sounds like.

He doesn't, he's not putting himself before the Word of God. It's all about the Word of God. And so, that's a good reminder to pastors, a good reminder to Christians, that it doesn't depend upon us to grow God's church, right?
To reach people. We've just got to be committed to the Scripture. We've got to be bold with it and let it go for itself. Let it speak for itself. It doesn't need us to tamper with it or twist it or sugarcoat it or adjust it so it better applies to our day and age, right?
We just need to let the Word speak for itself. The only way a believer can live like Stephen is by dying to their sinful self, which is the example there of John MacArthur and others we know who have, like Stephen, they're dead to their self.
And so, as believers, we must aspire to that. We are preoccupied with our own interests too often, and when we do that, we will have little desire to experience the kind of attitude that Stephen had, which was full of grace.
[11:12] Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 4. And there's a few Scriptures I want us to read there.

Ephesians 4, verses 1-3 and then 17-32. Ephesians 4, verses 1-3 and then 17-32.
And here, the Apostle Paul writes, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.
Now let's jump over to verse 17. Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.
They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learn Christ, assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him as the truth is in Jesus.
[12:24] To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil.
Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.
Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.
And so as we read those scriptures, we see that those accurately describe Stephen.
[13:40] It accurately describes the attitude it has, and that is what God expects of us as believers. We are to be people who are full of grace and truth, not looking to beat one another up, pick on each other, right, put each other down, but to love and support one another and encourage each other, and to also be bold and courageous with the gospel, no matter what personal cost might

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come with our boldness.

So we've got to have the right attitude. Secondly, like Stephen, believers take bold and courageous action in presenting and defending the gospel.
And so in verses 9 through 14, we see that Stephen's speaking the truth. He's got a good reputation. He's one of the big shots in the church. He's one of those people that God is using in a powerful way.
And he comes across some people who don't like that. And so they start to challenge him. And we see that Stephen doesn't back down. He's, in fact, he's answering their questions.
And he's doing so in such a way that they are, they're wrong. And he's proving that, you know, God's word is correct. And he's winning the argument, and they hate it.
[14:56] They don't like it. So who are these people he's talking to? Well, there's three people, three groups of people mentioned as a part of this argument. There's Stephen, and then there's the freedmen.

Stephen, these were descendants of Jewish slaves who were captured by Pompeii in 63 B.C. And they were taken to Rome, and they were later granted their freedom, and they formed a Jewish community there.
So there's that one group. The other is the Cyrenians and the Alexandrians. These were groups from two of the major cities of North Africa. Cyrene, if you remember, was the home of Simon, who helped Jesus carry his cross.
And Alexandria, both cities had large Jewish populations. Sicilia and Asia was the third group. These were Roman provinces in Asia Minor.
Since Paul's hometown of Tarsus was located in Sicilia, he likely attended their synagogue in Jerusalem. He may even have been, well, we see that because he was present at Stephen's trial and at his execution, it's possible that he could have been here participating in this debate with Stephen.
[16:06] We don't know, but it's likely. He was there for the persecution, so it's very feasible to believe that he was there debating with this group against Stephen.

So men from all three of these synagogues, they came together, and the Bible says that they argued with Stephen. Really, what was happening here was a debate. It's possible that Stephen, prior to conversion, was a member of one of these three synagogues.
Maybe they knew Stephen, and they were upset because he had been converted, and he was no longer one of them. And so they were eager to attack him because of that. We can assume from the charges brought against Stephen that the debate centered around the death, resurrection, and messiahship of Jesus, and the law's inability to produce salvation.
So based upon the charges that they brought against him, this is probably what the conversation was likely about. They didn't believe in the resurrection. They didn't believe that Jesus had been resurrected.
They didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah. And they didn't believe that the law was unable to produce a person's salvation. And so this is what the debate was about. And we see that, apparently, Stephen won that debate.
[17:17] It says there his opponents could not withstand the wisdom and spirit with which he was speaking. And so there we have this truth that human thinking is no match for the God-given wisdom that we have as believers, right?

And so we shouldn't be afraid to have these kind of conversations or these kinds of debates. Yes, the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But we shouldn't back down from these kinds of discussions.
So Stephen won the debate. Now here's another question. How can a Christian gain this kind of wisdom? Can we be like Stephen? Can we have that same kind of wisdom in our defense of the gospel?
Well, the clear answer to that is yes as well. How do we do that? By studying God's Word. The more you study God's Word, the more you read God's Word, guess what? The more you know God's Word. The more you memorize passages of Scripture, the better you're going to be able to recall those in times where you need them.
And also the study of apologetics, right? Okay. I remember a debate. It wasn't really a debate. But you guys know Ravi Zacharias.

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[18:25] And he'll go to major universities, the Ivy League schools where the really smart people are. And usually he has a colleague with him.

And they'll give a talk. And then afterwards they take a Q&A. And so there's this one interaction that he had with an audience member. And this guy was English. I don't know. They could have been in England.
I don't know where they were. But the guy sounded very sophisticated. And he knew what he was talking about. And so he asked Ravi Zacharias. He said, why are you so afraid of subjective moral reasoning?
Why do we need a book to tell us how to act? Do you think that we are all going to start raping, pillaging, just because we don't have a book that tells us what to do? Are you afraid of that? Because I'm not. That's not going to happen. What are you so afraid of? And if you get the opportunity to watch the clip, you should. Because Ravi Zacharias, he's so calm. I mean, he's so gracious with these people.
[19:22] They hate him. You know, a lot of them. Some of them, they really, a lot of them, they just want to know. But some of them, they just hate Christianity. Ravi Zacharias is there defending the gospel. And they just have so much hate in their questioning.

And this guy was very upset. And Ravi Zacharias, the whole time this guy is saying, he's just sitting there very calmly. And once he's done, he popped up right out of his seat. And he pointed his finger at him.
He said, do you lock your doors at night? And everybody started laughing, right? He's like, what are you so afraid of? Do you lock your doors at night? And the guy said, well, he kind of stuttered. He's like, yeah. And he's like, exactly my point.
You know, because we live in a sinful, fallen world, right? Why do we need this book? Because it has the words of truth. And we don't.
We don't trust each other. And we don't for good reason. You just watch the news. It's full of bad, bad things that people do to each other. It's terrible. So unable to defeat Stephen in a fair debate and unwilling to accept the truth that he was declaring and defending, they resorted to recruiting men to present false testimony against him.
[20:26] The same tactic that we saw was, again, used with Jesus Christ. The people were stirred up by these false charges. And so they seized Stephen and they brought him before the council.

Stephen counted the cost. He didn't run away from this. He carried on. He counted the cost. Let's look at Luke chapter 14.
He knew what it meant to be a follower of Christ. Chapter 14, beginning in verse 25. Now, great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.
And so what is Jesus talking about here? Well, he's talking about, comparatively speaking, how much you love God and how much you're devoted to God. It should look, it should appear as if you're so committed to the Lord that it would seem like hatred towards others.
Now, he's not really calling us to hate our family because we see, you know, we've got to let what is clearly implied in the scripture be what is explicitly implied in scripture, I should say.
[21:48] Defines what otherwise might be implied here. Does that make sense? So somebody could say, well, it sounds like Jesus wants us to hate father and mother and all these things. But then we go to the Bible, we see the Ten Commandments, father and father and mother, love your enemies, right?

So he's saying, comparatively speaking, your love and devotion for God should pale in all comparison to all other relationships, right? And I know, like, for me, I love my family.
And so if I love my family that much, that means I should love God even more, right? And that's what's commanded. All of your heart, all of your mind, all of your soul, all of yourself. So let's continue.
Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it.
Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish. For what king, going out to encounter

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another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes after him with 20,000?
[22:56] And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall it be salty again? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It's thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
And so Stephen was this kind of disciple. He was this kind of follower, right? And Jesus isn't saying, hey, this is only for Stephen and for some of you guys. He's saying that this is for all of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ.
This is the expectation. It's costly, but it's worth it. And Stephen counted that cost, and he understood that it was worth it. Let's look at Mark 8, verses 34 through 35.
There's a high cost of following Christ, but let's look at what he says in Mark 8, verses 34 through 35.
[24:03] And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it.

But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it. So we see that when we live selflessly, when we live for Christ, that it means that, yeah, we might be losing our life, but really we're gaining life.
We're gaining eternal life. We're gaining reconciliation with God because of Christ dying on the cross for our sins, right? Declaring us righteous because he gives us the faith to believe in him, to receive him as Lord.
And so these are great things. So ultimately, yes, what we should be doing, it is costly to follow Christ, but it's all completely and totally worth it.
And I don't think Stephen is in heaven right now regretting one bit that he spoke up, that he engaged in that debate. I don't think that he has ever thought once, you know, maybe I shouldn't have done that.
[25:12] Not at all. Not at all. Throughout this ordeal, Stephen's courage never wavered. He never backed down from the opposition he encountered. He reiterated the truth of the gospel and he refused to save his own skin.

His actions were characterized by boldness and courage. So jump forward to Acts 7, 51 through 53. We'll be there. I don't know if we'll get there next week, but we eventually will.
But I want you to see the boldness of this man. And I'm sure you've read these verses before, but let's read them again. And so here, Stephen, after presenting, preaching, speaking about the sovereignty of God, about the fact that Jesus is the Christ.
He is the Messiah. He has resurrected from the grave. He looks at them and he says to those who are accusing him, You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit.
As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the righteous one, whom you have now betrayed and murdered.
[26:22] You who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it. So he wasn't trying to save his own skin, right?

He wasn't trying to save his neck. He declared the truth. And at the end, he pointed the finger back at them and said, Listen, you know, you guys are the ones with the problem. You guys are the ones who need the change.
You guys are the ones who are directly standing in the wrath of God for your sins, right? You are going to have to pay. You are not believing. You are not receiving Christ.
And if you don't change, then you will pay for your sins, right? You've always been this way. You're going to continue to be this way. You must accept Christ. He didn't back down at all.
J.C. Ryle, I want to share a quote with you from him. He says, There is a common worldly kind of Christianity in this day, which many have and think they have enough.
[27:18] A cheap Christianity, which offends nobody and requires no sacrifice, which costs nothing and is worth nothing. And unfortunately, if you've been paying attention to some of the things that

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are happening in our world today, doesn't this characterize a lot of churches, unfortunately, in our nation?

You know, it's weak Christianity. They don't really say anything. There is just an example today or yesterday I was seeing of a church that just completely folded and backed away from an issue where they should have been bold, where they should have been courageous, but they were afraid that they might lose people.
You know, and if you read the gospel, you see that Jesus never had that concern, did he, right? Because he wasn't concerned about drawing a large crowd. He was concerned about people's salvation. And I think, unfortunately, a lot of our churches today, they don't care about their people's salvation as much as they care about having all their pews filled.
And that's got to change. That's got to change. And so how does it change? Well, I think it begins with those of us who know better to speak up, like Stephen said, and say, Listen, you know, we're not about drawing a large crowd here.
We're about the gospel. We're about God's word, and we're not going to compromise with that.
Thirdly, like Stephen, when we have the right attitude and are willing to take bold and courageous actions in presenting and defending the gospel, as a result, our appearance will reflect the glory of God.
[28:53] I'll say that again. Like Stephen, when we have the right attitude and are willing to take bold and courageous action in presenting and defending the gospel, as a result of that, our appearance will reflect the glory of God.

And I'll go back to my example of Ravi Zacharias right there when he's got somebody real mad and upset with him. And, you know, he's dealing with these intelligent people, and they're very upset, and they're very hateful of God.
He's very calm. He's very relaxed. Part of it is because he's smarter than they are, right? He's incredibly brilliant. But I think more importantly, it's because he's full of grace.
You know, he knows that what he believes is true, and he's not afraid of what questions might be asked. And so that calmness and also that love, you know, when you see him talking with people, and you see this in other circumstances as well.
John MacArthur is another. I had an opportunity to hear him preach in seminary, and a lot of people are like, he seems really stuffy and cold and mean. And I understand where they're coming from because he's uncompromising with the Word.
[30:03] That's not true, but he's just uncompromising. But when he's not preaching afterwards, I expected them to rush him off behind the back of the stage, you know, don't let those peon seminary students touch me like I'm too holy for them.

That wasn't the case at all. He was right there, right in front of the place where he preached, and students were coming up. They were taking pictures with him. They were talking with him, and he was talking with them all.
He was smiling. They had books that they were giving to him. He was signing their books. I don't think he likes it, but I think that he knows that he's important to the church, and he's important to seminary students.
In fact, the president of the seminary shared a story later that people would take, and I have a John MacArthur study Bible here, they would give him their Bibles to autograph.
And he was surprised that John MacArthur was autographing their Bibles. And so he said to him later, you know that you were autographing Bibles? He's like, I don't. Whatever they put in front of me, I sign it.
[31:02] So full of grace, right? And you see that as a reflection of those who are following Christ, even when they come across hardship, they see their suffering as an opportunity to give God the glory in that.

And so Stephen was doing that, and we need to do the same way. Okay. So here you see that I had to stretch a little bit to get that last A, because all the others are A in your three points.
But I did that because I think, you know, we see that that's the case. Stephen was reflecting the face of an angel, right?
Because he knew that he was speaking the truth and he was prepared for whatever that was going to bring, because he had counted the cost and he was willing to give even his life in service to the Lord.

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And so here's the irony of the situation. Stephen is accused of blasphemy, which was a great evil to commit. However, when the council members look at him, they see the face of an angel, right? [32:08] This is crazy. I think that something miraculous probably was taking place here, that God was setting his approval on Stephen, and it was reflected through his face to his persecutors.

He was putting his glory on his face, much like he did for Moses in Exodus 34, after he came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments. We reflect the glory of God in our appearance by the way our attitudes and activities glorify God.

When people see the church being the church, it reflects the awesome truth of the gospel. And so again, when we go out on the 31st and people see, hey, you know, one, these people are doing all of these nice things for us free of cost.

Two, they seem to really like each other, right? So if you've got beef with somebody in the church in your group, make sure that you resolve that before we go out, right? We don't want to be throwing hot dogs at each other at the soccer field.

That would not reflect the glory of God. But they'll see that. And there's something about, you know, when we as a church are out serving shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, and we're not doing it for ourselves, but we're doing it for others, people take notice of that.

[33:27] And it gives God glory. So I'm looking forward to the 31st and to many other moments and occasions where we'll have as a church to do this. All right, let's close in prayer. Lord God, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for the truth that we have. We thank you for the light that it is to our feet. And Lord, we know that we live in dark times. And there are blind guides leading the blind, and they're stumbling around in the darkness.

They don't know left from right. They don't know right from wrong. And God, you've called us as your people to bring our light and let it shine in the darkness.

You've called us to speak the truth in love, and you've called us to do so in a bold way, having counted the cost and knowing that even, Lord, if it was your will, that we give our lives as testimony to the truth, Lord, that we would be willing to give it because we know that the world has no power over our soul, over our eternity.

You told us, Lord, not to be afraid of those who can kill the body, but afterwards can do nothing with the soul, but to fear him who has the authority to cast the soul into hell.

[34:40] And so, Lord, we pray that our fear would not be of this world, that our fear would not be of Satan, that our fear would not be of what men might do to us, but that our fear would be of you, a healthy fear, a respect for who you are, a respect for what you've done, a respect for our salvation and your holiness, and that we would be zealous for that, Lord, that we would be uncompromising when it comes to the truth, that we would not shy away from debates, that we would not shy away from arguments, Lord, but give us the grace that we need in those moments to be able to be wise, to be patient with those who we're speaking with, to not return wrong for wrong, to not shout and get mad and beat up people who disagree with us, but to love them and to want to see them come to salvation.

And so, Lord, we pray for that. And we pray for the 31st again, God, when we are out as a church in different locations, that people would see your glory reflected through us, through our attitudes, through the way that we interact with one another, through the way that we interact with them.

And again, God, we pray that all of this would be for your glory. We pray that all of this would be for your honor and that all of this would be for your name. And it's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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